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Bill would study feasibility of biomass being used to construct roads, reduce financial and environmental costs

Yesterday, Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03) introduced the bipartisan Green Streets Act of 2009 (H.R. 1167) to reduce the costs of road construction. Communities across the country are postponing roadwork due to the increasing cost of asphalt. This bill is designed to reduce those costs by investing in a program to measure the feasibility of making asphalt from biomass.

Last year, the cost of asphalt skyrocketed without little warning and is expected to again in the future. The increase in cost has been caused by many refineries forgoing asphalt production to instead produce more profitable products like gasoline as well as the cost of crude oil continuing to fluctuate.

“To provide cash strapped cities and states the much needed break in asphalt costs, I have introduced the Green Streets Act, which would promote the research of alternative asphalt binders made from biomass,” said Congressman Carnahan.

“After years of neglect, now is the time to invest in new ideas to rebuild our economy,” said Carnahan.

“There’s real promise that biomass waste can reduce costs of construction and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

The legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation conduct a program to test the feasibility of such a product in a variety of traffic and weather conditions. Within three years the Secretary would be required to report back to Congress the potential cost savings, durability and environmental impact.

“Not only could this potentially cut street repair costs for communities across the country, but would also reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the amount of biomass left to give off carbon dioxide,” said Congressman Carnahan.

Funding for this program would come from the Highway Trust and is expected to have a dramatic impact lowering the costs of road construction as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the amount of biomass left to give off carbon monoxide. Congressman Aaron Schock (IL-18) is cosponsoring this bipartisan legislation. Both Carnahan and Schock serve on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee where the legislation has been referred.

